

# Life under the Red Banner: Minorities in Socialist Europe

*Call for Papers for the international Conference 11-12 September 2025, University of Basel, Switzerland*

## Conference Organizing Committee

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with the support of the BASEES Study Group for Minority History

## About the conference

Socialist regimes have built their ideology around the concept of equality. Committed to a communist classless society, those regimes - established under the banner of "Marxist-Leninist" or other socialist traditions - devised and introduced policies based on the belief that the quest for economic equality would gradually eliminate social divisions based on nationality, religion, and/or gender. On the other hand, diverse minorities were often drawn to socialism, as it held the promise of doing away with the discrimination and persecution they experienced under imperial rule or nationalist regimes in Europe.

In practice, however, socialist states closely engaged with their minorities and implemented a wide arsenal of policies that were directed towards their minorities, ranging from promotion, protection and accommodation to forced assimilation, repression and exclusion. Thus, the lived experiences of minorities under socialism exposed numerous tensions between the ideology of a classless society and the persistence of ethnic, religious, and social distinctions.

This conference aims to critically examine the discrepancies between the ideology, theory, and practice of minority policies in socialist countries, and discuss the everyday experiences of minority life under socialism through



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a comparative and transnational lens. Drawing on examples from different Soviet republics, countries of the socialist bloc, as well as non-aligned socialist states, such as Yugoslavia and Albania, this conference aims to draw scholarly attention to how various socialist regimes came to shape the status, rights, and experiences of different, and often marginalized, ethnolinguistic, religious, sexual, and social groups.

By underscoring intersectionality among this diversity of experience, the conference aims to encourage dialogue between scholars working on different aspects of minority history and the history of marginalized groups under socialism, and foster new perspectives on the divergence between socialist ideology, political practices, and minority life in the modern period, contributing to a better understanding of everyday life under the “red banner”.

## Key Themes

The conference organisers welcome papers that address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- The role of ethnolinguistic, religious, and gender differences in a socialist society
- Minorities' temptation for socialism and its consequences for minority politics
- Divergence and discrepancies between socialism, minority protection, and minority rights;
- Socialist policies on language, religion, and culture of the minority communities;
- Intersectionality of experiences of ethnolinguistic, religious, and sexual minorities in socialist states;
- The position of GSRM/LGBTQI+ communities under socialist rule;
- Case studies of minority resistance, collaboration, or adaptation under socialism;
- (Post-)socialist transitions and their effects on minority populations.



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## Submission Guidelines

The conference organisers particularly welcome PhD students and early career scholars to apply. To apply, please submit an abstract of 250-300 words, along with a short bio (150 words) to **juliaelena.grieder@unibas.ch** by **1 April 2025**.

Notification of acceptance by 1 May 2025.

Selected papers will be considered for publication as a themed section in the peer-reviewed online open-access academic journal, "*Euxeinos. Journal of the Swiss Academic Association for East European Studies*."

The organisers also aim to cover accommodation (up to max. two nights) and travel costs for accepted participants, travelling within Europe.



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